

# Bait Car Programs: A Literature Review



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## **What is a Bait Car?**

“A bait car, also called a decoy car, is a vehicle used by a law enforcement agency to capture car thieves. The vehicles are specially modified, with features including GPS tracking, hidden cameras that record audio, video, time, and date, which can all be remotely monitored by police. A remote controlled immobiliser (known as a "kill" device in law enforcement jargon) is installed in the vehicle that allows police to disable the engine and lock the doors.

The car is filled with valuable items and then parked in a high-vehicle theft area. When the car is stolen, officers are alerted, who then send the radio signal that shuts off power to the engine and locks the doors, preventing an escape. The practice does not violate entrapment laws, since suspects are not persuaded to steal the vehicle by any means other than its availability and their own motivation.”<sup>1</sup>

Bait cars are used to deter and capture both car thieves and thieves that steal valuables from cars. They are typically used as part of comprehensive anti-theft programs implemented by police departments.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bait\\_car](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bait_car)

## **What is Their Track Record?**

Dozens of jurisdictions across North America have used bait cars as part of broader efforts to combat vehicle-related crime. This paper contains news articles in which ten jurisdictions report drops in car theft and/or break-ins after starting bait car programs. Many of these jurisdictions report double-digit decreases in crime. British Columbia, Minneapolis and Stanislaus County, California all report drops in excess of 30%. Arlington County, VA reports that its car thefts are now at the lowest levels since 1965.

The key determinant of success is advertising. While these jurisdictions, for the most part, do not report the actual number of bait cars they use to the public, their fleets certainly do not comprise a large percentage of the cars on the road. But successful police departments rely on aggressive advertising programs to convince thieves that there are many more bait cars in use than are actually employed. British Columbia posts videos of arrests on their website, [www.baitcar.com](http://www.baitcar.com). The California Highway Patrol has supplied videos to a new Court TV show, Bait Car. Besides serving as invaluable evidence in court, the videos are posted on YouTube and are easily viewed by anyone thinking of committing auto crime.

We are aware of two instances in which bait car programs failed. In the District of Columbia, police department lawyers insisted that each bait car be monitored by no fewer than six officers. This requirement greatly eroded the department's manpower efficiency and resulted in little use of the cars. In Winnipeg, the police ended the program after six years, but it did not appear to be heavily advertised.

The evidence contained in this document indicates that bait cars can work, but only with heavy publicity and as part of broader, more comprehensive anti-theft programs.

## How Much Do They Cost?

The bait cars themselves are often not the biggest cost item. In British Columbia, Manitoba, Las Vegas, Dallas, St. Louis County, MO, Newport News, VA and Mesa, AZ some or all of the bait cars were donated or loaned by insurance companies. Insurance companies benefit from these programs because car thefts often account for as much as a third of the cost of auto insurance premiums. Reductions in theft mean more profits for insurance companies.

The cars have to be rigged with GPS, video and other surveillance-related equipment. Police and Security News reported in 2003 that costs ranged from under \$500 to over \$3,000 per car, plus start-up and subscription costs.<sup>2</sup> Some companies, such as BSM Wireless Inc., advertise comprehensive systems such as the “Stinger” on the Internet. Las Vegas police report maintenance expenses for hardware and software of \$7,000 per year.

By far the biggest cost component is advertising. This is critical to deterrence and cannot be ignored. The British Columbia police have reported spending more than \$4 million on their “marketing” programs. However, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia helped to develop and pay for the advertising. St. Louis County police have convinced insurance companies to fund part of the marketing costs. Dallas police describe their program as a partnership between police, prosecutors and insurers. The immense financial benefits insurance companies enjoy from these programs makes them natural suppliers of funding.

Conversely, failure to implement cost-effective anti-theft programs leads to higher auto insurance premiums – a cost ultimately borne by the citizenry.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.policeandsecuritynews.com/julyaug03/CarThieves.htm>

## **Articles on Successful Bait Car Programs**

Arlington County, VA: Program started in 2002. Car thefts now at lowest levels since 1965.

British Columbia: Program started in 2004. Vehicle break-ins down by 32% and car thefts down by 35% since the start of the program. Surrey, BC was formerly known as the “car theft capital of North America.”

Dallas: Program started in 2004. Saw a 10% reduction in car thefts in the program’s first year.

Edmonton: Program started in 2006. Officers have made 101 arrests, laid 275 charges and recovered 212 vehicles worth \$3 million.

Las Vegas: Program started in 2006. 150 car thieves arrested, 95% convicted in the program’s first year.

Mesa, AZ: Recorded 84 arrests since program’s start in February, 2003.

Minneapolis: Program started in 1997. Car thefts down by 30% since then. Over 240 criminals arrested with close to a 100% conviction rate.

Newport News, VA: Program started in 2005. Nine criminals arrested in first year.

St. Louis County, MO: Program started in 2004. Car thefts down by 20% through 2006. Bait cars are stolen about 35 percent of the time.

Stanislaus County, CA: Program started in 2005. Car thefts down by 40% in one of the country’s hardest-hit jurisdictions.

## **Successful bait-car program sees 84th arrest**

Senta Scarborough

The Arizona Republic

Jan. 10, 2008 11:55 AM

On Dec. 30, Mesa police hit No. 84.

That's the number of people arrested since the department began deploying decoy cars to catch auto thieves nearly five years ago.

Mesa was one of the first departments in the state to use "bait cars" when they rolled out their high-tech fleet in February 2003. Since then, the anti-theft program has been highly successful. It won a state award, has been credited with reducing car thefts and is a recognized model nationally.

Mesa has recently doubled its fleet of cars to attract and snag would-be thieves, said Mesa police Detective Travis Metcalfe, who oversees the program.

And two weeks ago, Mesa police hit the jackpot when five people found themselves sitting in the hot seat of a bait car in three instances over the weekend.

Marc Garcia was one of those five arrested. He was caught in a bait vehicle on Dec. 28 at 3:37 a.m., police said. Police learned Garcia was driving on a revoked license and said he had a bag of methamphetamine and a pipe in the car. Garcia told police he stole the car and he has smoked meth a few hours before, records show.

"It is just like fishing. Sometimes you get nothing and sometimes you hit the limit," Metcalfe said.

Mesa determines where bait cars are deployed based on crime trends and statistics.

The cars used in the program were previously stolen, damaged in accidents or highly sought-after vehicles on loan to the police department by insurance companies.

They are equipped with technology including a global positioning satellite tracking system, computers, video camera and cell phones to become the ears and eyes of police.

When a thief tries to steal the car, sensors send a signal that notifies police dispatchers who contact officers who follow the car. The GPS tracking computer system maps the location of the car in real time and at any time the officer can remotely shut down the engine and lock the car doors, trapping the thief inside.

One of the best aspects of the bait cars is the evidence they provide, police say. Once the car is triggered, video tape begins to record the crime from start to arrest, including conversations.

Last year, three teens set out for a joy ride. One had a screwdriver to steal the car until another teen found the key. But a younger juvenile, quickly figured out the car was a police decoy. He told them that soon the doors would lock and police would be on their way and told his friends to roll down the windows so they could escape. His advice came too late. With police on scene, the juvenile told his other friends, "We're going to jail for a long time."

City

**Attention all car thieves: Police will be watching you**

Antonio Planas

399 words

6 December 2007

[The Las Vegas Review-Journal](#)

2B

English

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By ANTONIO PLANAS

REVIEW-JOURNAL

Las Vegas police Lt. Robert DuVall anticipates he will be laughing even more at the expense of car thieves in Clark County in the coming year.

That's because a Metropolitan Police Department program that utilizes bait cars to catch criminals will soon be used by Henderson and North Las Vegas police as well as the Nevada Highway Patrol.

Thieves who steal bait cars can drive only a short distance before the car is turned off by an officer monitoring the vehicle. A camera in the car captures the reactions of criminals, caught like rats in a trap.

"We can actually see that look on their faces when they realize they've been had," DuVall said Wednesday. "It's nice to turn that around on them."

Las Vegas police launched the program in October 2006 and have used it to nab 150 car thieves, about 95 percent of whom have been successfully prosecuted, DuVall said.

Las Vegas, North Las Vegas and Henderson police are all reporting that car thefts are down this year, but they want to reduce the rate even more.

DuVall said the expansion of the program will entail setting up bait cars in all the agencies' jurisdictions around the valley. He would not say how many bait cars the program will have.

Two nonprofit organizations - the Nevada Insurance Council and the National Insurance Crime Bureau - donated money to pay for the bait cars, DuVall said. The maintenance of hardware and software for the program costs less than \$7,000 a year, he said.

DuVall's quest is to get Clark County off the National Insurance Crime Bureau's list of areas with the highest rates of auto thefts in the country. The organization labeled Clark County the worst in the nation last year.

"Nobody wants to be on that list," North Las Vegas police spokesman Sean Walker said.

DuVall and other authorities say Clark County will not be at the top of the list for 2007.

Auto thieves need to take heed, said Henderson police spokesman Keith Paul.

"Once you get into a bait car, that's the end," he said. "The car will shut down. The doors will lock. The boys will come after you."

Contact reporter Antonio Planas at [aplanas@reviewjournal.com](mailto:aplanas@reviewjournal.com) or (702) 383-4638.

Upfront

**Fighting crime with creative media**

Jesse Kohl

237 words

1 November 2007

[Strategy](#)

9

English

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If a picture's worth a thousand words, what's the value of having it hit the right audience at the perfect place and time? Vancouver's Wasserman + Partners Advertising did the math, and felt that the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia's bait car program could increase the odds of deterring theft by helping crooks visualize consequences when they're contemplating the deed. Bait cars, which trap would-be thieves, have succeeded in reducing auto theft in BC since 2002. But to make sure the message continues to arrest the target on their own turf, 15 parking lots in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland now feature graffiti art bolstering the message: "Steal a Bait Car. Go to Jail." The executions compellingly paint a Russian roulette scenario for thieves: life-size posters on parkade walls show a sorry-looking thief behind bars, and power-wash floor messages with directional arrows point toward bait cars.

"The urban-influenced format of these very clear, high-profile executions is designed to resonate powerfully with potential thieves, and serve as a deterrent in areas traditionally thought to be beyond the reach of law enforcement," explains Wasserman account supervisor Sean Weller, adding that the images launched last month will likely be added to parking lots in a wider geographical area around Vancouver in the near future. Wasserman + Partners also handled media buys.

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

2007PSSG0052-000864

June 29, 2007

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

### BAIT CAR ANNIVERSARY SALUTES DROP IN AUTO CRIME

VANCOUVER – Nine thousand fewer vehicles have been stolen over the past three years thanks to B.C.’s bait car program – the biggest in North America, Solicitor General John Les said today while celebrating the program’s third anniversary.

“Back in the late 1990s, auto theft was on the rise in B.C. and had reached unacceptable levels, to the point where media had dubbed parts of the Lower Mainland the auto theft capital of North America,” said Les. “Government and police knew we had to take action and together we have created one of the most successful auto theft fighting programs on the continent.”

Les congratulated police throughout B.C. and especially the Integrated Municipal Provincial Auto Crime Team (IMPACT) for their hard work in putting this innovative program to good use.

Since the bait cars hit the streets in spring 2004, ICBC claims figures show auto theft has dropped 35 per cent in British Columbia. From the spring of 2003 to spring 2004, 26,000 vehicles were stolen. In comparison, from spring 2006 to spring 2007, 17,000 vehicles were stolen provincewide.

In 2003, the year before the bait car program started across the Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley, ICBC paid out approximately \$100 million in stolen vehicle claims. In 2006, that number dropped to about \$70 million.

Bait cars are also used to combat thefts from vehicles. Police plant property in the cars in high-risk areas. Video and still pictures of suspects caught on tape are released to the media for identification and the public is quick to call and help the police. Vehicle break-ins are down 32 per cent both provincially and in the Lower Mainland over the past three years. In 2003, ICBC paid out approximately \$28 million for vehicle break-ins versus \$22 million in 2006.

“ICBC invests in programs that help reduce crashes and auto crime because it helps to keep insurance rates low and stable for our customers,” said ICBC director of road safety and loss prevention Nicolas Jimenez. “The bait car program, with the help of other auto crime initiatives, has been successful in reducing auto crime and making our roads safer.”

In addition to bait cars, police are using several other auto crime fighting tools, including Air One, the \$2.2-million helicopter that serves communities across the Lower Mainland, and Automatic Licence Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology, which helps police officers keep dangerous drivers off the road. Community volunteer patrols, partnerships with businesses, municipalities, and awareness initiatives are also helping to reduce auto crime.

“There are many programs, initiatives, volunteers and dedicated police officers that have worked together to drive down auto crime,” said Inspector Wayne Holland, Officer in Charge of IMPACT. “I’m pleased that the bait car programs continue to be the flagship for fighting auto crime in British Columbia.”

-30-

Media

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For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province’s news feeds using RSS, visit the Province’s website at [www.gov.bc.ca](http://www.gov.bc.ca).

Cityplus

**Cops hooked on bait car project; Auto thefts down since unit began setting traps**

Ryan Cormier

The Edmonton Journal

417 words

12 July 2007

[Edmonton Journal](#)

Final

B1 / FRONT

English

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EDMONTON

EDMONTON - A police unit that targets Edmonton's most prolific and expert car thieves has been renewed for another year and is looking to bring more bait cars to the city.

The Tactical Response to Auto-Theft Prevention, or TRAP unit, was created as a one-year pilot project in June 2006. In the six months after that, officers made 101 arrests, laid 275 charges and recovered 212 vehicles worth \$3 million.

There have been roughly 3,460 vehicles stolen in the first six months of 2007, compared to just under 4,000 in the same time period last year.

"That speaks to the success of the TRAP program," said Staff Sgt. Jim Peebles, the officer in charge of the unit. "That's 500 less victims."

The program was renewed for another year at an internal police meeting on Tuesday. It will continue with the same resources and structure it has for the past year, although Peebles plans to ask for more officers when the program comes up for renewal again in June 2008.

While targeting the most successful thieves, the program also works with Crown prosecutor Robert Palser to ensure the thieves they arrest are kept behind bars.

Peebles plans to expand the number of bait cars being used in Edmonton. He has asked the Insurance Bureau of Canada to help fund six new specially equipped vehicles for the city.

Police do not release how many bait cars they have operating in the city now.

"I want to try to use Edmonton as a pilot project and then go provincewide," he said.

"The success of the program in Vancouver puts pressure on the Insurance Bureau of Canada. We're trying to use that to our advantage."

Bait cars have hidden cameras inside to record thieves and their engines can be remotely disabled by police.

In British Columbia, bait cars are largely credited with a 35-per-cent drop in auto thefts across the province and a 43-per-cent decrease in the greater Vancouver area.

The rate of stolen vehicles in Alberta is nearly three times the national average, says the Alberta Motor Association. In 2006, there were 10,084 thefts in Edmonton alone.

Stolen vehicles fund both organized crime and the drug trade in the city. Also, 70 per cent of police pursuits in Edmonton involve a stolen vehicle.

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## **Car thefts down in S.J.: San Joaquin, Stanislaus counties both saw drop in thefts**

By Rick Brewer, The Record, Stockton, Calif.

McClatchy-Tribune Business News

700 words

15 March 2007

[The Record \(MCT\)](#)

English

Distributed by McClatchy - Tribune Information Services.

Mar. 15--STOCKTON -- Car thefts in San Joaquin County were down by nearly 10 percent in 2006, according to recent statistics released by the California Highway Patrol. But Stanislaus County saw even greater success, with a 40 percent decrease. Prosecutors say until car thieves can be locked up longer here, such a drop in San Joaquin County is unlikely.

In San Joaquin, 7,396 cars were stolen in 2005 compared with 6,810 last year.

Stanislaus County saw nearly 2,000 fewer cars and trucks stolen in 2006, by far the largest decrease in densely populated counties in the state.

For the past three years, San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties have ranked as two of the most prevalent car theft areas in the country by population, based on an annual assessment the National Insurance Crime Bureau performs. The trade group that annually tracks stolen cars uses the same numbers as the CHP.

"We've re-emphasized car theft as one of our major missions in those areas," CHP spokesman Tom Marshall said. "The whole state has gotten attention, but (San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties have) always shown up at or near the top of the list, so they have been targeted for additional enforcement."

The CHP and some local agencies have added bait cars -- those with Global Positioning System devices, microphones and video cameras embedded to catch thieves in the act -- and electronic license plate readers to assist in finding cars.

San Joaquin County has battled auto theft with a multiagency task force, known as Delta RATT, the Regional Auto Theft Team. The unit's supervisor, CHP Sgt. Troy Rivers, said undercover officers have saturated high theft areas and occasionally used bait cars. He said 105 arrests were made in June alone during a bait-car sting.

"We allow our officers to go out and hit known areas, identify and apprehend suspects," Rivers said. "Of course, we like to get them in the cars whenever possible because there's no fudge factor."

Lt. Jeff Morris of the CHP is in charge of STANCAT, Stanislaus County's auto theft task force. He said three factors in the past 18 months have led to a significant reduction in stolen cars in and around Modesto: widespread use of bait cars; notoriety given those arrested -- their pictures are shown in local media on a weekly basis; and striking a deal with the Stanislaus County Jail not to release those charged with auto theft before other nonviolent offenders.

"It's worked for us," Morris said.

Frank Scafidi, an NCIB spokesman, agreed.

"All parts are meshing nicely," he said. "What you find is that auto theft is not done by a lot of auto thieves, but by individuals and rings that hit five or six cars each day. When you take a half-dozen of those knuckleheads off the street, you can see the numbers go down dramatically."

Stanislaus County has kept car thieves in jail despite its overcrowded status, said Sheriff's Department spokesman Tom Letras. Car thieves are held longer than other nonviolent criminals, Letras said, but are released prior to violent ones.

The incarceration situation in the San Joaquin County Jail in French Camp is different. The jail is so overcrowded that car thieves often are released before the District Attorney's Office even receives their paperwork.

"No one wants to let these people go, but someone has to be let out, and who's that going to be -- someone who's beating his wife or someone who stole a car?" asked San Joaquin County Chief Deputy District Attorney Chuck Schultz. "Until that jail problem is fixed, it won't get better. It will only get worse."

Other populated counties that saw significant drops in car theft in 2006 were San Francisco, Orange and Placer. Meanwhile, the number of cars stolen in Santa Clara County increased by more than 25 percent.

Contact reporter Rick Brewer at (209) 239-3324 or [rbrewer@recordnet.com](mailto:rbrewer@recordnet.com).

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NATIONAL

**Recording equipment makes convictions "indisputable." ; How to catch a thief?  
Bait vehicles are the lure, then police close the trap**

By Jamie Stockwell

Washington Post

676 words

7 January 2007

[The Philadelphia Inquirer](#)

BULLDOG

A02

English

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ARLINGTON, Va.

Keith DuBois chalked it up to poor luck the first time someone broke into his 1996 Jeep Grand Cherokee. But the second time, about two weeks after he had spent \$3,800 on repairs, DuBois realized it wasn't just misfortune.

"My car had a giant target on it," he said. Both times, it was parked beneath a light on the same Arlington County street, and both times, someone used a sharp object to pry the driver's door and rip open the steering column. It's also one of the most commonly stolen vehicles in Virginia.

"I didn't want there to be a third time," DuBois said.

And so DuBois, 46, did what no other Arlington resident has done: He offered to give his sport-utility vehicle to the county, a donation that the five-member county board accepted.

DuBois had read about a police department program that uses bait cars rigged with audio and video recording equipment and engines that can be shut off with the push of a remote button to nab thieves. He figured that if the bad guys were so determined to steal his Jeep, they could do so under the watchful eye of the law.

"If it's that desirable of a car to steal, then I want for it to do some good," DuBois said.

Bait vehicles tempt thieves with unlocked doors or keys dangling in the ignitions. The second that a thief takes the bait, hidden audio and video recording devices are activated, and a silent alarm alerts the county's emergency communications center. By tracking the car's internal global positioning system unit, dispatchers monitor its location, travel and speed, and as soon as officers are in position, the dispatchers disable the engine and lock the doors.

Thief caught. Case closed. Almost every time.

Arlington police officers have responded to 73 activations and have made 56 arrests since the first car was deployed in February 2002. The activations that did not result in arrests

include cases in which someone tampered with a bait vehicle but didn't drive away or in which juveniles were caught poking around inside vehicles and were not arrested.

To date, every defendant has pleaded guilty to felony and misdemeanor theft charges because of the "indisputable video evidence," said Lt. Mark Belanger, head of the county's auto theft unit. "When we've got you on videotape breaking into a car, there's not much you or your lawyer can say about it," he said.

"By adding this Jeep to our fleet, we expect to get a few more activations and make a few more arrests. This is great for the Jeep owners out there," Belanger said, noting that Jeeps were among the top three vehicles stolen in Virginia. The bait fleet has other commonly stolen cars, such as Hondas and Dodges.

Aside from being a high-tech way to nab thieves, bait cars provide a rare look at the initial moments of a common crime. Most of the time, it's not that exciting, officers said, because most interceptions take place within about two minutes and most arrests within four.

The cars are placed in high-theft neighborhoods. In 2002, when the bait-car program began, 676 cars were stolen in Arlington. The next year, the number was down to 599, before sinking to 493 in 2004 and 419 last year, the county's lowest figure since 1965. This year, Belanger said, the number should be about 350.

By accepting DuBois' offer, the County Board also authorized expansion of the bait-car program and agreed to begin accepting vehicles from Arlington residents. Police said that DuBois' Jeep would be repaired - again - and outfitted with about \$4,000 worth of equipment.

"The more hooks you have in the water, so to speak, the more fish you're going to catch," Belanger said.

Local News

## 'THE NEXT CAR YOU STEAL COULD BE A POLICE BAIT CAR'

By Shawn Day sday@dailypress.com | 247-4816

731 words

8 October 2006

[Daily Press](#)

Final

C3

English

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### NEWPORT NEWS

Special cars and HEAT are designed to help accelerate the recent decrease in car thefts in Newport News.

The car is loaded with sensors, cameras and tracking equipment, and it's parked somewhere in Newport News. Police hope someone tries to steal it.

When it is stolen, officers will know exactly when the thief slipped behind the wheel and where the vehicle is heading. Police can cut the ignition by remote.

Since they were put into use last year, these "bait cars" have helped Newport News police arrest nine people, each of whom either stole the bait car, or CDs or other items inside the vehicle. The program, police say, is helping reduce an already declining number of motor vehicle thefts in the city.

Car theft has dropped every year for the past three years in Newport News and last year's 764 thefts marked a 37 percent drop compared to the total in 2002, which recorded 1,216 vehicle thefts, according to city police statistics.

In 2002, the city joined the Virginia State Police's HEAT program (Help Eliminate Auto Theft), which promotes theft-deterrent measures and offers rewards for information leading to a vehicle thief's arrest, said Newport News Police Sgt. Ron Hendrickson.

Hendrickson oversees the department's bait car program, and he described the effort as "another proactive step" toward reducing motor vehicle theft throughout the city. Other departments across the country also have turned to such technology to curb car theft, including Dallas and Minneapolis.

"This system is sitting out there in that car, and that car's like any other car in the neighborhood," Hendrickson said. "It'll blend right in."

Insurance companies donated a few vehicles for the department to use as bait, and police spent a \$6,800 state grant and \$1,300 in city funds to buy sensors, cameras and other electronic monitoring equipment used in the vehicles.

Cameras record a thief's every move once he or she steps inside the bait car, and sensors relay information about the thief's actions through a computer network to police.

If the thief drives away, a nearby officer will be dispatched to pull over the vehicle. At that point, police can cut power to the engine and lock the car doors, Hendrickson said.

The driver still would be able to steer and brake, he said.

The entire scenario plays out in a few minutes, Hendrickson said, adding that in one case, two young men "stole our car inside Stoneybrook and were detained before they got out of Stoneybrook."

Across the country in 2004, the 1995 Honda Civic topped the list of most-stolen vehicles, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau. In Virginia that year, the 1996 Honda Accord was the most-stolen vehicle, the bureau reported.

In Newport News, Hendrickson said, the most commonly stolen vehicles are Dodges, Plymouths and Hondas manufactured in the early- to mid-1990s. Those vehicles are easy targets because they lack modern anti-theft equipment, he said.

Owners who don't park in well-lit lots, or who leave their keys in their cars, also invite thieves, he said.

Men aged 16 to 20 are most often responsible for stealing cars for temporary transportation, Hendrickson said.

He added that the majority of stolen vehicles are recovered in Hampton or Newport News within a week.

Police wouldn't reveal how many bait cars the department has or the types of vehicles deployed across the city.

"The next one you steal could be the bait car," Hendrickson said. \*

#### TIPS TO DETER CAR THEFT

- \* Park in a well-lit area.
- \* Use a "Club," an anti-theft device, on your vehicle's steering wheel.
- \* Install a car alarm.
- \* Lock your vehicle's doors.
- \* Don't leave your keys in the ignition.
- \* Don't keep valuables in plain view inside your vehicle.

Source: Newport News Police Department

#### HEAT

The state police program to deter car theft is called HEAT, or Help Eliminate Auto Theft.

Anyone with information about the theft of a vehicle is asked to call 1-800-947-HEAT (1-800-947-4328). Callers who give information that leads to an arrest in a Virginia case are eligible for a cash reward up to \$25,000.

NEWS

**To catch a thief: Cops are using cars as the bait; Minneapolis police are daring thieves to steal vehicles in one of the most successful programs of its kind in the country.**

Joy Powell; Staff Writer

1043 words

27 August 2006

[Star-Tribune](#)

METRO

1A

English

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For two days, the Toyota Camry was parked on a Minneapolis street. Then early one morning this month, someone jumped in and sped off with it.

Just as police planned. The car was bait.

Minutes later and blocks away, officers nabbed the driver, Abdihalim D. Mohamud. Inside the car, police had hidden a video camera and installed technology that sent a message to a 911 dispatcher, who in turn used a global positioning system to track the stolen vehicle. The 23-year-old Minneapolis man is now in jail on his second such charge since 2004.

Daring thieves to steal cars is a tactic police are using more to fight auto theft, a crime whose costs include higher insurance rates for all motorists. Each year, on average, thieves steal 3,500 cars in Minneapolis.

The city's bait-car program is one of the first and most successful of its kind in the country. More than 240 people have been arrested in the operation since it began in 1997, including 34 so far this year.

The conviction rate is nearly 100 percent - because it's tough to beat a case with your face on tape, and often your voice, as you steal a car, authorities say.

Officer Wayne Johnson, who leads the city's auto-theft prevention program, declined to say how many bait cars he has on streets in Minneapolis. "I'd like thieves to think we have one on every block," he said.

Johnson studies maps showing where vehicles have been stolen, then turns to his fleet of bait cars and chooses similar models to park in hot spots. He shrugs off critics who say the program is profiling certain demographic groups or thugs known to police.

"I don't just say, 'Johnny Dirtball lives here, I'm going to park it in front of his house,'" Johnson said. "That's not how I do it. I do it by what's happening in that neighborhood."

Johnson's last quarterly report showed that he had bait cars out every week.

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Linked with violent crime?

Auto thefts have risen nearly 10 percent this year. Lt. Greg Reinhardt, a police spokesman, said he suspects that the increase is linked to a spike in violent crime in the city; thugs are stealing vehicles to use in robberies and assaults.

Still, the rate of auto thefts remains down about 30 percent since the bait cars first hit the streets, Johnson said.

Auto thieves snared by the program have ranged in age from 9 to 56. Many are involved with drugs, robberies and street-car racing.

More than 40 percent of the time, Johnson said, it's previously convicted felons who steal bait cars. But Mohamud this month became the first suspect to be arrested twice in a Minneapolis bait car. He still was wanted on a warrant charging him in 2004 when arrested this month.

Bloomington, Brooklyn Center and St. Louis Park have similar programs. About 16 other Minnesota cities, including St. Paul, have tracking equipment but do not have bait cars.

Minneapolis gets about \$150,000 a year from the state to pay for its program. The grant comes from a 50-cent fee included in vehicle registrations.

Don't leave keys in car

Frank Scafidi, a spokesman for the National Insurance Crime Bureau, said that he is convinced that using bait cars is effective. "It's the best thing to come down the pike for auto-theft prevention and control since jail," he said.

Auto thefts add up to \$7.56 billion in losses, based on an average value per vehicle of \$6,108, Scafidi said. When you factor in associated costs such as victims' time off work, investigative resources, prosecutions and higher insurance costs, consumers pay hundreds of dollars extra each year, the NICB says.

According to the Insurance Information Institute, about one-third of a typical comprehensive auto insurance premium pays for auto-theft claims.

"If you own a car and if you're paying insurance, then you're paying for auto theft, even if you're not a victim," said Bob Henderson, an NICB agent in charge of auto theft prevention in Minnesota.

The best step consumers can take is not leaving keys in cars, which is the case in about one of every four vehicles stolen.

The most commonly stolen cars: 1995 Honda Civic, 1990 Toyota Camry, 1994 Honda Accord, 1989 Oldsmobile Cutlass and 1994 Chevrolet Blazer.

Thieves target certain cars for parts and others because they're simply easier to steal. Cars get stolen for use in other crimes, and often just for transportation, with high gasoline prices adding one more incentive for vehicle heists.

Another new twist, Henderson said, is the "cloning" of cars, a process in which thieves use new technology to copy vehicle identification numbers (VINs) from legitimate cars for use on stolen vehicles.

In 2001, authorities recovered only four cloned vehicles with a combined value of \$88,333, according to the NICB. Last year, they recovered 479 cloned vehicles valued at \$12.86 million.

Authorities are urging people planning to buy a used car to first check databases such as Carfax.com, which charges a fee, to make sure the VIN isn't assigned to another car. If consumers do buy cloned cars, Henderson said, the vehicles can be seized by authorities.

Joy Powell - 612-673-7750

## HIT THE BRAKES ON THEFT

The National Insurance Crime Bureau recommends a layered approach:

### LAYER 1

- Lock doors
- Remove keys
- Close windows
- Park in well-lit areas

### LAYER 2

- Audible alarm system
- Steering-wheel lock
- Steering-column collars
- Theft-deterrent decals
- Wheel locks
- Window etching

### LAYER 3

- Smart keys with computer chips that must be present to start the vehicle
- Fuse cutoffs and kill switches
- Starter, ignition and fuel disablers

### LAYER 4

- Have a tracking system installed. It emits a signal to police or a monitoring service and puts your vehicle on a radar screen if stolen.

Source: National Insurance Crime Bureau, 2006

## ON THE WEB

[www.nicb.org](http://www.nicb.org)

Metro

**Bait car campaign aims to scare criminals Sponsors of the campaign include an area auto dealer, insurers and others.**

By Heather Ratcliffe ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

789 words

6 March 2006

[St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)

Third Edition

B1

English

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Correction published, Thursday, March 9, 2006 - The Midwest Anti Auto Crime Association, known as MAACA, is a sponsor of the St. Louis County police bait car program. This story misnamed the organization.

Deevan Dixon had never heard of a "bait car." Ten months after he was convicted of stealing one and sent to prison, he still doesn't quite know how it works.

"I think they've got cameras and microphones in it," Dixon said in a phone interview from the Farmington Correctional Center. "There is no way to tell it's a police car. It looks like any other car sitting on the street with the keys in it."

A hidden video camera and other electronic gadgetry helped police catch Dixon, 49, when he took a St. Louis County bait car in June last year. Dixon claimed that a woman had asked him to move it for her, and that he did not intend to steal it. But he pleaded guilty anyway.

"I knew I couldn't win," Dixon said in a recent interview. "It was a setup any way you look at it."

Dixon's story is one that police very much want other car thieves to hear.

"Steal a bait car, go to jail -- Bait cars are everywhere." That's the slogan for the new marketing campaign meant to scare criminals.

Similar campaigns in cities across North America, including a \$4 million marketing promotion in British Columbia are credited with reducing car thefts up to 40 percent.

It is niche advertising, and the niche is thieves.

"We want them to think that any car on the street could be a bait car," explained county police Sgt. Tim Silver, who leads the auto crime unit.

Police have taken cues from the best marketing manuals -- essentially, know your audience and how to reach it. So posters with the slogan are plastered on walls where prospective thieves, or their friends, would most likely hang out -- police stations, jails, juvenile detention centers, convenience stores and high schools, to name some.

A prisoner at the St. Louis County Justice Center sees the message when he gets fingerprinted. It's hanging over the inkpads. He sees it again where he gets back his property before release, a sort of final reminder before hitting the streets.

Fred Tutenberg, owner of the Dirt Cheap chain, agreed to hang the signs in all his liquor and cigarette stores. "The county police have been so supportive to us and the community," he said. "I wanted to help them in any way I could."

Silver said police want to fan out the posters even more widely. "I'd like to hang these signs anywhere and everywhere we can," he said. "Auto theft is not just a police issue. It's a community issue, and we need the community's support."

The county's bait cars are left parked with hidden technology that signals police when someone takes them. Dispatchers can shut off the engine and lock the doors by remote control once officers are in place to make an arrest.

Several departments in Missouri and Illinois, including the St. Louis city police, use some form of bait for car thieves.

St. Louis County started in mid-2004, a year that saw its vehicle theft rate dive 23 percent from the year before. It rose slightly last year, but still remained 20 percent below the 2003 level, police said.

During the program's first full year, 2005, county police arrested 20 people inside bait cars.

Police found that when they set out a bait car, it is stolen about 35 percent of the time. About two-thirds of the thieves were juveniles.

Every adult who came to trial for stealing one, including Dixon, chose to plead guilty. He got a five-year prison sentence. Several cases are pending.

The county's program and marketing are funded almost entirely through donations. Insurance companies, car dealers and other organizations provide money, equipment, cars and marketing materials.

Sponsors include the Lou Fusz Automotive Network, the Midwest Anti-Auto Theft Crime Association, the National Insurance Crime Bureau, Liberty Mutual, Farmers Insurance, AAA insurance, Geico and the Juvenile Justice Association.

Silver said there is a warning in the posters for honest people too.

"We certainly want to reach the bad guys and send them a message," he said. "But it can also be a reminder to citizens to do their part to stop auto theft, like not leaving their keys in the car."

PHOTO | PHOTO - Posters are on walls where prospective thieves hang out.

METRO

**Police say 'bait cars' are catching thieves More than 100 suspects snared with high-tech vehicles**

WENDY HUNDLEY

Staff Writer

772 words

25 February 2006

[The Dallas Morning News](#)

EAST

1B

English

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Memo to car thieves: The next vehicle you steal might take you for a ride.

That's what's happened to more than 100 suspects unlucky enough to be charged with stealing or burglarizing one of the "bait cars" used by police in Dallas, Richardson and Carrollton.

Officials say the use of these high-tech vehicles - which can be remotely tracked and controlled - has been so successful that they'd like to expand the initiative to other area cities so more criminals can take the bait.

"We're inviting others to get involved," said Sgt. Kevin Perlich, a spokesman for the Richardson Police Department, which followed Dallas in using bait cars to put a damper on motor vehicle-related crimes. Richardson has made nine arrests using bait cars and is spearheading the program in the suburbs.

While it's too soon for Richardson and Carrollton to have measured the impact of the crime-fighting tactic, Dallas is reporting a 10 percent reduction in auto thefts since it started using bait cars in 2004, when 15,881 vehicles were stolen in the city. Last year, that number dropped to 14,277.

"We believe it has played a significant part in the reduction of auto thefts," Dallas police Senior Cpl. Max Geron said of the bait car program, which has netted 91 arrests and 58 convictions.

The program is the result of a partnership among police, prosecutors and the insurance industry, said Jay Norris, a senior special agent for the National Insurance Crime Bureau, a nonprofit organization that provides the fully equipped bait cars to area police departments.

While he won't say how many bait cars are deployed locally, Mr. Norris said the vehicles are rotated among participating police departments to provide an ever-changing supply of targets for unsuspecting criminals.

"If we use just one car all the time, people would know it's a bait car," said Sgt. John Crawford of the Carrollton Police Department, which has made eight arrests using bait cars. "By using a fleet of them, we can move them around."

Here's how the bait works: Cars equipped with pinpoint cameras, GPS tracking systems and remote-control gadgetry are placed in areas with a high incidence of theft and burglary.

When an intruder enters the car, police are alerted and can begin tracking the location. When they're ready to converge on the vehicle, they can lock the doors and disable the engine so the bait car slows to a halt, imprisoning the suspect.

Mr. Norris said the cars help police avoid dangerous, high-speed chases, and their hidden cameras provide photographic evidence for prosecutors, increasing the likelihood of successful prosecutions.

One self-confident suspect parked a stolen car in front of a soup kitchen and was apprehended by police when he was eating a free meal. And a thief with a long criminal history was sentenced to 35 years in prison after being captured in a bait car.

When asked about the use of bait cars, Plano defense lawyer Howard Shapiro said he doesn't believe they constitute entrapment of suspects.

He said the entrapment defense is used to argue that someone not predisposed to commit a crime was enticed to do so by police.

"If you get into a car that's not yours and your intent is to steal it, you're going to have a hard time asserting an entrapment defense and making it work," Mr. Shapiro said.

Authorities say the monitoring devices used in bait cars could also be applied to trucks, motorcycles or even construction equipment.

While the number of suspects arrested in bait cars is relatively small, officials believe the program has a larger impact because it acts as a deterrent to more motor vehicles crimes.

"We've had thieves get in our cars and say, 'You don't think this is one of the bait cars, do you?'" Mr. Norris said. "It works. Every place that has a successful bait car program has seen annual decreases in auto theft."

In the long term, he said, law-abiding citizens might be the real winners in the bait car program.

"If we can reduce the theft rate, insurance carriers can reduce premiums," Mr. Norris said. "That's our goal."

E-mail [whundley@dallasnews.com](mailto:whundley@dallasnews.com)

Video: Watch surveillance video from inside a selection of DPD bait cars.

PHOTO(S): (Dallas Police Department) A hidden camera shows a suspected car thief in action. Police can lock doors and disable engines remotely.

## **HOOK, LINE AND SINKER; COPS USE HIGH-TECH BAIT CAR TO NAB UNSUSPECTING CROOKS**

BY CHRIS TOGNERI, BEE STAFF WRITER

1289 words

2 November 2005

[The Modesto Bee](#)

ALL

A1

English

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The two men circled the parking lot, hardly believing their luck.

Here was this car, just sitting there. The owner must have gone inside for a minute, leaving the doors unlocked, the radio blaring and the keys dangling from the ignition.

Easy pickings.

So in broad daylight, they took the bait. Rufino Angel Felix, 19, jumped into the driver's seat and sped away, tires screeching, as Bobby Gene Smith, 28, whooped with glee in the passenger seat.

"What's up, dawg? I'm ready to go to Fresno," Felix said. "It's a for-sure thing, fool. We got a full tank of gas ... let's go for a cruise, you feelin' me?"

He wasn't.

"I think this is a setup, fool," Smith said.

"Chill, fool," Felix said. "We got this (expletive) now. Best believe I'm gonna make it to Fresno. For reals, dawg. ... This is a blessing to us, dawg. We took a chance."

Felix's confidence notwithstanding, that car had zero chance of making it to Keyes, let alone Fresno.

Police say as many as three in 10 vehicles stolen in Stanislaus County are almost exactly like this one, left running and unattended in front of homes or businesses. But this was no careless owner's car. This was the police's newest weapon in the battle against vehicle theft: a bait car.

It may look like an old, beat-up four-door, but bait cars are state-of-the-art thief traps. At a cost of \$16,000 for equipment, they are fitted with global positioning mapping systems, hidden cameras, tape recorders and devices that allow police to operate several functions remotely. Police can kill the engine and lock thieves in the car, all with the click of a computer mouse.

How it works is simple: Investigator Dave Corder with the Stanislaus County Auto Theft Task Force leaves the bait car out, often with the doors unlocked, radio blaring and engine running. It could be anywhere in the county, he said, in front of markets, on residential streets or in mall parking lots. Then he waits.

In an unmarked vehicle that could be across the street or on the other side of town, Corder watches a computer screen. On it is a map showing the location of the bait car, whether its engine is running, if the doors are open or closed, even its speed when moving.

At a standstill, the bait car is a green triangle on Corder's screen. When someone tries to drive it, a bell rings on his computer and the triangle becomes a circle. The GPS system allows Corder to track the car's every move.

Corder alerts uniformed police of the theft, and they move into position behind the car. When police turn on their sirens, Corder cuts the power to the engine and locks the doors.

"Absolutely foolproof," StanCATT Sgt. Rick Gilstrap said. "We have the ability to lock them in, cut the engine and make the arrest safely. This has the potential to make a huge difference in vehicle theft in Stanislaus County."

So far, however, the bait car has not made a difference. Through August, thefts are actually up in Stanislaus County this year.

But Gilstrap said he believes that once thieves learn bait cars are out there, the theft rate will drop. The cars will be a deterrent simply by "planting that thought in the back of crooks' minds that, hey, this could be a setup," Gilstrap said.

Gilstrap listed two other reasons StanCATT loves the bait car:

- \* With investigators able to kill the engine and lock thieves inside, the potential for dangerous high-speed pursuits is eliminated.
- \* It's all caught on tape, thanks to the hidden camera in the dashboard behind the clock. "It's often difficult to (get charges to stick) on passengers," Gilstrap said. Not so with bait cars.

Bait cars are used throughout the state, said the StanCATT commander, Lt. Jeff Morris. Police agencies in Arizona and Minnesota also use them and report lower theft rates since their introduction. In British Columbia, police even use bait motorcycles, ATVs, snowmobiles and boats. Video highlights of arrests are shown online at [www.baitcar.com](http://www.baitcar.com), a site popular even among valley investigators.

StanCATT got its first bait car in March from the Sacramento office of the California Highway Patrol, where the cars are outfitted, Morris said. The task force can access any number of cars from a fleet in Sacramento.

Since early August, investigators have used the car "seven or eight" times a month.

In that time, nine people have stolen the bait car. All were caught. Seven of the nine pleaded guilty to car theft, and two cases are pending.

Felix and Smith took the bait Aug. 17 on Crows Landing Road. Police caught up to them on the Whitmore Avenue exit off Highway 99.

Felix pleaded guilty and is serving 180 days in county jail for the theft. Smith -- who is seen on the car's video surveillance claiming he had no idea the car was stolen -- is facing 240 days in jail if convicted. Out on bail, he has failed to show for two court appearances, Assistant District Attorney Carol Shipley said.

StanCATT uses other high-tech tools as well, Gilstrap said, including night-vision goggles for conducting surveillance. Officers also can place tracking devices on vehicles officers identify as stolen, so they can monitor the thief's movements, he said.

"We will take advantage of all (new developments) to prevent vehicle theft here," Gilstrap said.

For now, though, StanCATT's favorite tool is the bait car. Not only does it work, investigators said, it's also amusing.

"We usually watch the video after (arrests) just to get a good laugh," Morris admitted. As he said this, Morris was watching a tape of a man sliding into a bait car in August and driving off, apparently pleased with himself for landing a new set of wheels.

Moments later, the door locks snapped shut, seemingly all by themselves.

"Uh-oh," the thief says.

Police arrest him seconds later. As Morris watched the man curse at police from inside the bait car, he grinned.

"Priceless," he said.

Bee staff writer Chris Togneri can be reached at 578-2324 or [ctogneri@modbee.com](mailto:ctogneri@modbee.com).

## **B.C.'s bait car program wins global praise:**

**David Carrigg visited pre-Katrina New Orleans, where he found recognition for the work of our auto crime cops**

*The Province*

*Thursday, October 6, 2005*

*Page: A10*

*Section: News*

*Byline: David Carrigg*

*Source: The Province*

*Series: Stolen Lives: An in-depth look at the dangerous world of auto crime*

Corporal Tim Shields stands in front of a packed meeting room in the New Orleans Hilton.

Behind him is an image of Robert Jeremy Osborne, the infamous Surrey meth addict captured on bait car video.

"This might rub your noses the wrong way," Shields warns the police and insurance reps gathered at the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators' Bait Car Users Group, held just weeks before Hurricane Katrina devastated this city.

"You are hardened street cops and judge your success by the number of arrests you make. But that's outdated thinking. In reality, any bait car program should be judged by how well you get the message out there."

B.C.'s bait car program is the largest in North America and has generated enormous interest since Shields started posting video of bait car captures on the website [www.baitcar.com](http://www.baitcar.com) earlier this summer.

Over the next half-hour Shields, of B.C.'s Integrated Municipal Provincial Auto Crime Taskforce (IMPACT), talks about the role of media and advertising in a bait car program and learns about bait cars in other jurisdictions and countries.

In New Zealand, police don't have the money for a bait car program but advertise they have one anyway.

In Minneapolis, Minn., the police don't lock bait car doors remotely for fear of liability if the criminal is trapped in the vehicle and hurt themselves, while in New Orleans the police don't yet have the technology to remotely track their two bait cars.

In Australia they call them "gotcha cars" and in Tucson, Ariz., police will shut down the motor of a bait car as soon as the criminal starts the engine.

B.C.'s bait car success can be traced to the Richmond garage of Phil Ens, the Vancouver Police Department's auto theft expert.

It was late winter, 2001, and the VPD's Stolen Auto Squad was losing a battle with a gang stealing high-end Japanese sports cars.

"We were getting hit hard every week by this gang," says Ens. "They were getting four or five cars a week, stripping them and selling the parts."

The thefts were also hurting ICBC, so the two organizations met to come up with a way to deal with the crisis.

Ens had heard about a bait car program being operated by the Minneapolis Police Department -- considered the mother of all bait car programs -- and wanted ICBC to replicate the program in Vancouver.

"I said to ICBC, 'Let me prove this to you,'" Ens says.

The veteran policeman and car buff contacted Quebec's Boomerang Tracking Solutions, which provides a Global Positioning Satellite-based vehicle tracking service, and struck a sponsorship deal.

Boomerang shipped over a new Acura Integra and some basic equipment, while Ens bought a VCR and digital camera and turned the Integra into a bait car.

The gang worked mostly in the afternoon and targetted vehicles parked at golf courses, so Ens placed the Integra at Langara Golf Course.

"We locked the car, we didn't leave the keys in the ignition and it was gone in 45 minutes," he says.

ICBC was impressed and in September 2002 funded the VPD's bait car program and launched an award-winning ad campaign.

"Auto theft went down right away because of word-of-mouth among the thieves," Ens says. "It created a level of paranoia and the advertising kept it in their conscience."

Within a year auto theft was down seven per cent in Vancouver, and the pattern continues. In the first six months of 2000 there were 1,626 cars stolen in Vancouver, compared to 1,110 stolen in the first half of 2005.

Last spring, the provincial government announced the bait car program would expand to include the entire Lower Mainland.

In April this year the IMPACT bait car program was expanded to Vancouver Island, after a spike in auto theft in Nanaimo and Victoria, with immediate results.

IMPACT now controls the largest bait car program in North America, and the only one in the world featuring a motorcycle, ATV and snowmobile bait program. It is also the first to operate a website showing bait car video.

At the New Orleans meeting, Shields showed video of RCMP officers arresting a suspect, warning the man to raise his hands, then step out of the vehicle and lie on the ground.

Two officers from the notorious New Orleans Police Department laughed at the procedure. Arrests are generally a bit rougher in the Big Easy.

While discussing police pursuits, an officer with the St. Louis County Police Department noted: "If you can shoot them, you can chase them."

Officers who observed the Osborne video were amazed he was allowed to drive for so long before the vehicle was shut down.

The incident occurred in June 2004 and prompted a review of the shut-off policy.

RCMP tests found a vehicle still has power steering and brakes for long enough after a vehicle is shut down at high speeds to be safe.

Police will now shut down a bait car traveling at any speed.

The consensus among the users group was that auto thieves in the U.S. get harder prison time than in Canada.

For example, an Arizona officer said the average sentence for a repeat offender there is between four and 10 years.

Bait cars are also loved by police because video evidence is undeniable.

In Minneapolis, of the 240 car thieves arrested through its bait car program, only one has even gone to trial and he lost.

"You just can't fight the video," says Wayne Johnson, the Minneapolis Police Department's bait car coordinator.

*dcarrigg@png.canwest.com*

NEWS

**POLICE HOPE PUBLICITY ABOUT "BAIT CAR" EFFORT WILL DETER THIEVES; THEY WEIGHED DISCLOSURE AGAINST LOSING ELEMENT OF SURPRISE**

By Jeremy Kohler Of The Post-Dispatch

549 words

23 November 2003

[St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)

FIVE STAR LIFT

A10

English

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St. Louis police arrested a man in a stolen Jeep Cherokee on Halloween. On the floor of the Jeep were two rocks. They asked him why.

Police said the driver, William Smith, 18, of the 5300 block of Cote Brillante Avenue, told them he'd heard on the news that police were now baiting thieves with special vehicles that could be shut down and locked -- trapping the thief -- by remote control.

Smith told them if it happened to him, he needed something to smash the windows and escape, officers said. Smith did not return a phone message a reporter left at his home. He was charged with tampering in that case and subsequently arrested again on Nov. 11 after being accused of driving a stolen Jeep Liberty.

Smith's comments gave police pause, says Lt. Ed Kuntz, commander of a task force trying to reduce auto theft. Had they erred in announcing their use of so-called bait cars? Did they tip their hand to thieves?

With the Post-Dispatch and other news media asking to monitor police efforts to fight auto theft, how much more of their strategy should they divulge? Was it really in the public interest to announce, for example, that undercover police officers were now putting stolen cars under surveillance?

To tell or not to tell. That was the question.

Police researched what other departments have done. Kuntz said a case study in the United Kingdom had found that media coverage of similar crime fighting efforts only served to amplify their effectiveness.

St. Louis police ultimately decided publicity was to their advantage, Kuntz said. They hope what they lose in the element of surprise, they might gain in deterrence. Thus the police view this story as a potential crime-fighting tool.

The idea is to make would-be thieves believe every car is either a "bait car" or under surveillance. So maybe they'll walk away from some of them rather than driving away in all of them.

By giving the media access to the task force and bait car program, Police Chief Joe Mokwa said he also wants to demonstrate to a frustrated public that police are doing something.

"I would prefer to warn and caution even the worst thieves to stop rather than incarcerate them," Mokwa said. "Our whole purpose is to reassure the public that we do know there is problem."

\* \* \* \* \*

#### 2002 vehicle thefts

1. Los Angeles one every 15 minutes
2. New York 20 minutes
3. Phoenix 21 minutes
4. Chicago 21 minutes
5. Houston 22 minutes
6. Detroit 22 minutes
7. Dallas 29 minutes
8. Philadelphia 40 minutes
9. Las Vegas 42 minutes
10. San Diego 49 minutes
11. St. Louis 53 minutes

\* \* \* \* \*

#### 2002 thefts by population

1. St. Louis one per 35 residents
2. Las Vegas 38
3. Detroit 40
4. Newark 43
5. Tampa 45
6. Phoenix 52
7. Atlanta 58
8. Fresno, Calif. 60
9. Sacramento 61
10. Washington 62

Source: FBI

SEE MAIN STORY: "In St. Louis, a car is stolen every 43 minutes" on page A1 and related story "Man finds stolen cars, tracks down owners" on page A10.

## **Articles on Failed Bait Car Programs**

District of Columbia: Program started in 2004. Police department lawyers insisted that six officers monitor each bait car, crippling the program's effectiveness.

Winnipeg: Program launched in 2001, ended in 2007. Bait cars criticized as "too labour-intensive and not very effective." The program was not heavily advertised.

City

## **Winnipeg police quietly abandon bait-car program**

Bruce Owen

450 words

3 October 2007

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

a4

English

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Mary Agnes Welch and Bruce Owen A high-tech program touted as a sure-fire way to catch car thieves has been quietly shelved by the Winnipeg Police Service.

The demise of the bait-car program was made official yesterday in Question Period when Tory Justice critic Gerald Hawranik demanded to know why the Doer government wasn't pushing the police service to use global satellite positioning to nab thieves in the act.

Hawranik said the program has been successful in British Columbia, Alberta and a number of American cities. In B.C., the bait cars have been credited for cutting auto theft by 35 per cent, he added.

Hawranik also said the province should spend less time lobbying Ottawa for changes to Canada's Criminal Code, asking for tougher penalties for auto crime, and more time putting the bait cars back on the road.

"We're headed in the wrong direction," Hawranik said.

Justice Minister Dave Chomiak told the house the bait-car program was too labour-intensive and not very effective.

The police service launched the bait-car project, called Satellite Tracking Eliminates Auto Theft Loss, on Nov. 9, 2001.

A bait car is equipped with GPS tracking technology that alerts police when the vehicle is activated. Through the tracking device, police are able to locate the car, shut down its ignition and ideally, make a speedy arrest.

What the service didn't know was that the system's hardware was sometimes unable to function in Winnipeg's frigid weather. Police also discovered the GPS tracking technology wasn't always up to snuff.

But what ultimately ended the program was a lack of officers to respond when a bait car was stolen.

Sources said the bait-car program was halted when provincial law enforcement agencies launched the Winnipeg Auto Theft Suppression Strategy, an initiative that has helped cops identify the worst auto thieves.

The result, said sources, is more thieves are locked up on breaches and kept in custody longer. Judges are also handing out longer sentences for repeat offenders.

"Would you rather have police doing curfew checks or sitting on a bait car?" a source asked.

So far this year, auto theft in Winnipeg is down 27.6 per cent from 2006.

Officials say if the trend continues, the city will record its lowest car-theft rate since 2000.

Manitoba Public Insurance's ignition immobilizer incentive program has also contributed to fewer auto thefts this year, MPI officials say.

Since it was launched 18 months ago, 83,332 vehicle owners have participated in the program.

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City

## **Little heard about bait-car program Auto thefts up despite 2-year-old effort**

Bruce Owen

697 words

24 November 2003

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

b3

English

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Bruce Owen

It's been two years since the Winnipeg Police Service introduced its high-tech bait-car program to fight back at joyriding teenage car thieves.

The police service kicked off its Satellite Tracking Eliminates Auto Theft Loss program Nov. 9, 2001. Officers showed the media how wireless global positioning satellite technology could catch thieves in the act and put them in jail. Manitoba Public Insurance was also on hand, as they contributed about \$150,000 to the program.

To date, the police service hasn't said much about their bait cars. Almost nothing, in fact.

By way of background, the bait-car program is successfully used by dozens of police departments throughout North America. Regina, Ottawa, Vancouver, Peel Region, Calgary and Hamilton each use bait cars to reduce auto theft.

Here's how it's supposed to work: Police park a GPS-equipped car on a street or parking lot in a high-risk area, where's there's been a spate of car thefts.

Police do not leave the keys in the ignition of the bait car and just walk away. A thief comes along and breaks into the car, smashing a window or jimmying the door. Within seconds, they start the car by using only a screwdriver.

When they start the car, the thief activates a tracking device that's monitored by wireless GPS technology. That alerts a senior officer at the downtown Public Safety Building that the car has started and is now moving.

The senior officer, watching the bait car's direction on a computer screen, then directs police cruisers toward it. When police get close enough, the senior officer at the PSB can shut down the bait car's ignition. Police on the ground can then make quick arrests. In some bait cars that have electronic door locks, that same officer can also lock the doors.

The real beauty of the system is the fact that there's a hidden camera inside the bait car. That camera records the thief's every move and every spoken word, which is in turn used against them in court.

A handful of thieves, some as young as seven and eight, have been arrested this way in Winnipeg, but again, the police service hasn't told the public how many.

When they launched their program two years ago, Winnipeg police were the first in Canada to have such a program. Not any more. The other Canadian cities have apparently eclipsed the Winnipeg Police Service in using bait cars to reduce car theft.

In Vancouver, the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia has said auto theft claims have decreased 30 per cent since September 2002 because of the bait cars. In Hamilton, the number of stolen autos has been reduced by 24 per cent below the past five-year average.

In Winnipeg, MPI figures show auto theft is up 5.1 per cent in Winnipeg so far in 2003 compared to 2002. Car theft jumped 24 per cent last October compared to the same month the year before.

Police believe the spike in thefts is mostly due to known, experienced car thieves getting out of custody and going back to their old ways.

"They're just too lazy to take the bus," a source said. "It's an adrenaline rush for them."

Sources also said the Winnipeg Police Service hasn't quite written off the bait-car program yet.

Early next year a public education campaign will be initiated to tell car thieves that any car they target could be a police bait car. The campaign will focus on shopping mall parking lots, popular places for thieves. It's believed Polo Park and St. Vital have already tentatively agreed to the plan.

Signs will be put up warning prospective thieves that any car they steal could put them behind bars.

"Bait cars are everywhere," say the signs already up in Vancouver. "Steal one. Go to jail."

The hope in Winnipeg is the signs do the job the bait cars were supposed to do.

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Metro

**Inefficiency Plagues Program to Curb D.C. Auto Thefts; Legal Fears Create Staffing Rule That Makes 'Bait Cars' Less Effective Than Elsewhere**

Del Quentin Wilber

Washington Post Staff Writer

1416 words

21 August 2005

[The Washington Post](#)

FINAL

C01

English

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Parked in an area hard hit by auto theft, the cars look like any other in the neighborhood. Sometimes there is trash on the floor, or perhaps a university decal on the rear window. The keys may rest on a seat or dangle from the ignition. Within a few hours or days, a thief takes the lure.

As he slips behind the wheel and motors away, the stolen vehicle sends an electronic tracking signal to police dispatchers. In short order, officers kill the engine by remote control and descend on the suspect. Police say these high-tech "bait cars" save time and resources. In Minneapolis, for example, the successful program is run by an investigator and an unpaid intern.

When D.C. police adopted the program last year, the aim was to help curb one of the worst auto theft rates in the country. But the department's nine bait cars, which cost \$324,000, rarely have been deployed because of a legal concern. Unlike other police departments that rely on technology to alert them to any thefts, D.C. police are required to assign officers to monitor their cars at all times.

One officer keeps a car under constant watch, four others are positioned nearby in two cruisers and a sixth is stationed at police headquarters to send the electronic signal to kill the car's engine. In more than a year, D.C. police have made 18 arrests. The bait cars were used three times last month. They are deployed so infrequently that some commanders have turned to using them to secretly record undercover drug deals, police officials said.

Police said the heavy surveillance is required by the department's lawyers, who are concerned about being sued if a bait car hit a bystander. The lawyers were particularly worried because a high percentage of the city's auto thieves are juveniles with little experience behind the wheel, police said.

Agencies regarded as leaders in the field of bait cars, including police departments in Arlington County and Minneapolis, deploy cars without surveillance, sometimes for days or a week at a time. Police officials in both agencies said they felt the benefits of the cars outweighed any potential for harming bystanders, particularly because the cars can be shut down remotely.

"Getting sued is the chance you take when you do something proactive," Minneapolis investigator Wayne Johnson said. "For the most part, it works the way it should. It's a good product."

D.C. police Lt. Brian McAllister, who started the District's bait car initiative last year, said he wanted to create a program similar to those in Arlington and Minneapolis. "But I had to come up with a plan that was acceptable to put vehicles out on the street, liability-wise," he said. "You can't really put a vehicle out there and then wash your hands of it."

Disappointed with the program's effectiveness, McAllister said he would "like to see the agency as a whole revisit the issue of deployment and how we use them."

Bait cars are gaining popularity among police agencies across the country. In the Washington area, Loudoun and Montgomery counties have bait cars. Prince George's and Fairfax county police are obtaining the vehicles, officials said.

At D.C. Council hearings and in community meetings last year, police heralded the cars as an easy way to curtail auto thefts. The cars would lead to iron-clad arrests because video cameras and microphones hidden in the vehicles would record a suspect's image and voice. Police also can remotely lock the cars' doors, helping to prevent the suspect from fleeing.

McAllister, who heads the central auto theft unit of the D.C. police, said he began trying to get the bait cars in 2003 and applied for federal grants. The department obtained \$294,000 in grants from the U.S. Justice Department to buy cars and equipment. The nonprofit National Capital Police Fund, created by the nonprofit Federal City Council, donated \$30,000, records show.

D.C. police bought the most popular stolen vehicles, including Fords, Jeeps, Chryslers, Dodges and Toyotas.

In May 2004, police deployed their first three bait cars. But when officers put one on the street for the first time and allowed it to be stolen, they lost the car in traffic. Suddenly, the sedan's tracking signal evaporated. It took police two days to find it. An \$80 videocassette recorder in its trunk had been stolen.

Technicians eventually fixed and upgraded the cars' technology. Three months later, detectives hit the streets and quickly made 12 arrests -- five of them of juveniles. McAllister said the central auto theft unit was borrowing officers from the city's seven police districts to handle the cars.

"We had a car out almost every night," McAllister said. "It was really working great."

But technological problems cropped up again, he said, and police decided to upgrade the computer software and tracking devices. As the cars were retooled, police deployed them sporadically. By April, grant funding had allowed the department to add six cars to the fleet.

About that time, top police officials removed the bait cars from the centralized auto theft unit and sent them to the seven police districts. They hoped commanders would be able to deploy them more often and react quickly to reports of thefts and community complaints. But commanders and auto theft detectives found that they did not have enough personnel

to make the program work. They also found it hard to justify putting six officers on a single car to deter auto thefts when they were battling more serious crimes, they said.

Statistics show the cars were deployed 13 times in June and July. In May, the cars were deployed about 20 times. In April, they were used twice. The most recent arrest in a bait car was more than a month ago, McAllister said. Before that, he said, police last made an arrest in April or May.

The infrequency of deployment frustrates D.C. Council member Phil Mendelson (D-At Large). He said he expected the cars to generate "hundreds of arrests" in their first year.

"I'm disappointed to hear there are so few arrests," Mendelson said. "I've always thought the bait car program was an excellent program. The problem with stolen cars is just enormous."

D.C. Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey conceded that the cars were difficult to deploy but said the vehicles were just one tactic to fight auto theft. He noted that car thefts in the District are down 26 percent from last year, with the city recording 3,666 auto thefts through July.

"It's a crime-fighting tool; it's not the end-all," Ramsey said, adding that he likes putting more officers on bait cars because it helps ensure that suspects don't slip away. "We have to find the balance. It's just one of many crimes we investigate."

Arlington police, who in 2002 were the first in the area to use the cars, credit the initiative with helping to reduce the county's auto theft rate 30 percent -- to 493 last year. Forty people have been arrested in the bait cars, and 31 have pleaded guilty in court, police said. Cases against the remaining nine are pending, police said.

Department officials, who declined to say how many bait cars they have, said the cars also deter thefts because suspects don't know what they are stealing. Officers may soon put up signs in some neighborhoods with warnings about bait cars to try to scare off thieves.

"We don't have to spend any additional manpower on watching the cars," said Matt Martin, an Arlington police spokesman. "We don't have to have a team of detectives sitting on it. The cars are always out there. . . . We're very happy with them."

Minneapolis police, who have been using the cars since 1997, said no bystanders have been hurt in accidents and police have made 240 arrests. Auto thefts have dropped 38 percent since they began using their fleet of more than a dozen bait cars.

"We wanted it so it would be cost-effective," said Johnson, the investigator who runs the program. "The days of surveillance for auto theft are over."

## **Appendix One: British Columbia's Bait Car Advertising Wins Strategy Marketing Award**

April 7, 2003 - Strategy Media Archive

Best Media Plan

Best plan overall: Runner up, Best use of radio: Winner

How to nab a thief with radio

page M 6

Agency/media company

OMD Canada - Palmer Jarvis DDB, Vancouver

Clients

The Insurance Corporation of BC; Vancouver Police Department

Brand

Bait Car Program

Budget

Less than \$400,000

Media used

Radio

Out-of-Home

Newspaper

Timing

Launched in September 2002

Media team

Lenora Kaltenborn, group director of strategy, PJDDDB Vancouver

Michelle Rebalkin, supervisor broadcast/strategy, PJDDDB Vancouver

Scot Keith, account director, PJDDDB Vancouver

Maureen Atchison, project manager, PJDDDB Vancouver

Geoff Taylor, account co-ordinator, PJDDDB Vancouver

### The background

Over the years, auto crime in Vancouver has reached epidemic levels. In 2001, there were 5,300 stolen automobiles in Vancouver. This represented a 9% increase over the previous year and cost the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC) - and in turn, B.C. car insurance policy holders - \$21.8 million.

Vancouver police data also indicate that a high percentage of the 5,300 stolen vehicles are used by criminals in other criminal activity, such as B&E's and home invasions.

Something drastic had to be done to stop auto thieves. The Vancouver Police Department and ICBC launched the innovative "Bait Car" campaign with a high-profile press conference on Sept. 25, 2002.

Bait Cars are vehicles of all makes that are modified with high-tech gadgets. The cars are left in high-theft areas such as gas stations, convenience stores, underground parking lots and malls. When a thief enters the Bait Car, a silent alarm goes off, telling the police that the car has been stolen. Both videotape and audiotape record the auto thieves' actions within the car and collect evidence for use in court.

The car is also equipped with a global positioning system that tells the police the vehicle's exact location. Police track the car and surround the accompanying streets to prevent high-speed chases. When the vehicle is in a safe spot, the engine can be shut off by remote control. The suspects are then arrested on the spot.

The campaign is a first for the VPD: Most police departments measure their performance by the number of arrests in any given crime description, but the Bait Car campaign uses advertising to deter crime. The fear of stealing a Bait Car and getting caught causes many thieves to stop stealing cars altogether. Thus, the quantifiable objective of the campaign was not so much to increase the arrest rate, but simply to reduce auto theft in Vancouver by 10%.

### The plan

How to catch a car thief? With a limited media budget and a narrow target group, cost-effective and targeted media were essential for this tactical plan.

### Insights

Radio was positioned as the primary medium. Working with the Vancouver Police Department, we were able to determine which radio stations were on when the stolen cars were recovered. We also spent time planning when the ads would run. The renowned Simon Fraser University criminology department was able to provide input on both the creative message and what dayparts were best to air the commercials to reach this elusive

target group. It was important to get broad awareness out of the gate in all dayparts, but we heaved up in the evening when most cars get stolen.

## Ideas

Hip hop/rap is overdeveloped as the music of choice among younger car thieves. With the launch of such a radio station format in the market closely coinciding with the launch of the Bait Car program, we approached the BEAT-FM to partner with our client to create excitement, hype and provide a "fun" element to the program.

To kick off the launch of the program, the BEAT ran a live on-air and online contest involving its morning crew. The morning team "stole" a station-branded vehicle equipped with a GPS device. While the radio team drove around the city for a few hours, listeners could log onto the BEAT Web site and visually follow the vehicle to determine where it was located to try to win an anti-theft device.

The roving DJs also called the station at different times to give clues to their whereabouts. The BEAT vehicle was then surrounded by Vancouver police at a designated area and the DJs were brought back to the station in handcuffs. The live on-air chatter of the promo plus the online element generated considerable hype and built awareness very quickly.

In addition, the station had representatives from the Vancouver Police Department and ICBC as on-air guests on its "Urban Affairs" show.

To enhance the campaign and provide continuous awareness, a 52-week, 30-second brand awareness campaign was negotiated with the BEAT as part of the overall promotion.

Other radio stations were included and aired the 30-second brand campaign at various times during the year to increase the overall reach. As well, transit shelters and washroom ads were purchased and strategically positioned in high-auto-crime areas. Finally, a continuous banner ad campaign in a local Vancouver daily newspaper helped the Bait Car program produce a larger-than-life impact.

## The results

\* Vancouver police statistics for 2002 show that the program had an immediate impact on auto crime numbers in the city: Comparing the fourth quarter of 2002 with the same quarter of 2001 and the third quarter of 2002, shows a 22% decrease in the number of cars reported stolen to the VPD. This translates to about 400 fewer families in Vancouver suffering through the cost, inconvenience, and stress of having their cars stolen.

\* Statistics from ICBC during this period further corroborate the VPD numbers: The corporation has seen a 30% reduction in auto-theft claims for the fourth quarter of 2002.

\* The campaign has been incredibly successful to date. The Bait Car program was originally considered a pilot project and is now a full-blown program that may go outside Vancouver.

Finally, the campaign led to the direct arrest of one car thief - without the help of an actual Bait Car.

The commercials were purposely created to sound more like a police broadcast than your usual radio ad. They were recorded outside a studio over police CBs to make them as authentic as possible. As a result, the commercials have been some of the most talked about advertising in Vancouver. (The ads have even been parodied by local radio station XFM).

The ads were so realistic the police reported that one car thief heard a spot while driving a stolen vehicle and thought it was the police talking directly to him.

Mistakenly thinking that he was in an equipped Bait Car and the police were in pursuit, he ran a red light. Unfortunately for him, a police car happened to be at the adjacent stop and saw him run the light.

They pulled him over and he kept asking them how they were able to speak to him in the stolen Bait Car. The police quickly realized that he thought he had stolen a Bait Car when really, he had just heard one of the radio ads. Bottom line: they went along with it and arrested him. He pleaded guilty.

The judges rave...

"A creative can-do approach that well represents media planners in Canada. Brilliant!"

"This entire campaign was well planned, well purchased and executed with a touch of magic. It is not easy trying to identify a target group that is comprised of potential villains and this group cracked it. Well done!"

## BAIT CAR RADIO - GPS

(30 seconds)

MAN: This is a message to the guy who just stole the white SUV from Pacific and Howe

MAN: We know you did it

SFX: [Pause]

MAN: But what you don't know is that you just stole a Bait Car

SFX: [Pause]

MAN: It's equipped with a GPS and right now you're being tracked by the police

SFX: [Pause]

MAN: You can probably see us getting into position

SFX: [Pause]

MAN: We're just waiting for a safe spot to arrest you

ANNCR: The Bait Car Program from the Vancouver Police.

Sponsored by ICBC, E-COMM. and NAVLYNX.

## **Appendix Two: Chat Transcript from Court TV Website with Sergeant Troy Rivers of the California Highway Patrol<sup>3</sup>**

'Bait Car'

Sergeant Troy Rivers of the California Highway Patrol on fighting auto theft

Aug. 14, 2007

Court TV Host: The new Court TV program Bait Car uses high-tech hidden cameras and sophisticated satellite trackers to catch car thieves in the act. Watch the show, Mondays at 10pm - and chat with Sergeant Troy Rivers of the California Highway Patrol's auto theft unit, which runs the operations you see in the show.

Court TV Host: Our guest, Sergeant Troy Rivers of the auto theft unit of the Calif. Highway Patrol, is here with us now!

Court TV Host: Welcome, Sergeant Rivers, thanks for being our guest online today.

Sgt. Troy Rivers: It's a pleasure to be here. As many people know, California is the leading state in the nation for auto theft. We currently see in excess of 240,000 vehicles stolen annually and as a result we try to be as progressive as we can in combating this problem. California Highway Patrol for the last 75 years has been a leader in combating auto theft and as a result we're always looking at newer technologies to apprehend thieves and recover stolen vehicles. The attitude of many in the public is that vehicle theft is considered a property crime and those of us in the California Highway Patrol, do not look at this as a property crime or a victimless crime because we know and understand the type of financial impact that the loss of a vehicle to a family can cause on them. And so we try to do everything that we can to ensure the recovery of those vehicles that are stolen, with assistance of all the law enforcement agencies in California. As a direct result, we currently see an approximately 90% recovery rate of all reported stolen vehicles. However, we find that we can improve upon that 90%, and that is why we have implemented the "bait car" program and involved ourselves in an excess of 18 vehicle state task forces statewide and have our own specialized units as it relates to cargo theft and theft of vehicles that are destined for exportation out of the country.

Question from DavidFL: How many car thieves have been taken off the streets using Bait Car since its inception?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Since its inception we have seen more than 500 vehicle thieves apprehended and prosecuted, and as of today, we've had a 100% conviction rate.

Question from JERRY: Sgt Rivers: If there are 240,000 vehicles stolen every year, how many auto theft convictions are there every year? 120,000? 200,000?

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.courtTV.com/chat/transcripts/2007/0814baitcar-rivers.html>

Sgt. Troy Rivers: That number is one that I do not have, because we deal with so many jurisdictions - we deal with so many counties. I believe it's 58 counties - that's how many we have in the state of California. As a result, we haven't compiled statistics for total convictions. And for the 90% of the vehicles that have been recovered - many of those are recovered abandoned, with no suspects, and that's what make the bait car program so unique. Every time a bait car is stolen, we are able to apprehend the suspect or suspects.

Question from prindewey: Exactly how does the Bait Car program work?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: The bait car program works this way: we designate vehicles that we believe statistically to be high theft vehicles. Those vehicles are outfitted with hidden cameras, GPS tracking, technology and video and audio recording capabilities. The vehicles are deployed in areas where we believe there is a high concentration of vehicle theft activity or have a propensity for vehicle theft activity. And then those vehicles are deployed in a fashion that would make them susceptible to individuals who are looking to steal vehicles. We deploy undercover and uniformed officers throughout the areas in which these bait cars are deployed and await activations. The activations can be as simple as someone opening the car door, and from there, we wait for the suspect or suspects to go mobile with the vehicle. And then from a remote location at the discretion of the officers on scene, are able to immediately disarm the vehicle and shut it down in order for our officers to go in and initiate an arrest. The benefit to this technology is that it allows us to monitor suspects' activities but also minimize the possibility of pursuits, which minimizes risks to the public, which is our number one goal.

Question from DavidFL: I guess you won't be calling me to use my 1993 Toyota Tercel any time soon?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Depending upon the location, the theft of a 1993 Toyota Tercel will occur more times than you think. It is contingent on the needs of the vehicle thieves, and your '93 Toyota Tercel will have inherent value to someone who has a need for parts for that vehicle. So, don't forget to not leave your number!

Question from hippiechick: What is the most popular type of car to be stolen these days?

Question from DavidFL: What car is stolen the most?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Depending upon the geographic location within the state, it varies. In your more rural areas, your light duty trucks, like Chevy trucks and Chevy SUVs are extremely popular. But when you go into the more metropolitan areas, like L.A. or the Bay Area, you're going to see a higher propensity for passenger vehicles being stolen. But to specifically answer your question about the top vehicle, in 2006, our number one reported stolen vehicle in California was the 1991 Honda Accord. The number one stolen personal pickup truck, light duty pickup, is the 1988 Toyota pickup truck. And for motorcycles, our number one stolen motorcycle is a 2005 Honda. I can give the top ten for vehicles: As I said before, the 1991 Honda Accord topped the list... followed by the 1990 Honda Accord. Then, the 1989 Toyota Camry. '92 Honda Accord. And then our 5,

6 and 7 spots are all Toyota Camrys - model years 1990, 1991, and 1998 And then the number 8 spot is held by the 1995 Honda Civic. Number 9 is the 1994 Honda Accord. And rounding out our list at number 10 is the 1993 Honda Accord.

Question from DavidFL: Remind me not to buy a Honda Accord.

Sgt. Troy Rivers: LOL

Question from Cortaid: Is that because there are so many of them?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Yes, based upon the sheer number of vehicles for Honda and Toyota, but the biggest reason is not just their sheer numbers but also the desire for replacement parts for those vehicles that are on the road. In California, many of the vehicles we recover - and the 10% we don't recover - end up in chop shops to be sold as replacement parts for vehicle repairs.

Question from prindewey: Looks like from your list that if you have an American car you're safe. Your list included all foreign cars.

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Unfortunately, to a certain extent, that is true. Of the top 40 stolen automobiles in California, the only American manufacturer that appears on that list is the 1994 and 1993 and 1995 Saturn SLs - and in that order, with the '94 being the most popular. And that holds the distinction of being, at number 25, the highest domestically owned car that is stolen.

Question from hammy: In Vancouver Canada the bait car program has been effect for years and years now. Did you consult with them to determine its efficacy?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Through organizations such as the Western State Auto Theft Investigators and its parent organization, the International Auto Theft Investigators Association, and our contacts with other law enforcement organizations, we have reviewed the success of not just Canada's bait car operations but also of those in Europe. And as a result of their successes, and the realization of the technology available - that's what motivated us to implement our current bait car program.

Question from DavidFL: Hasn't the ACLU attempted to claim Bait Car was an invasion of privacy?

Question from MaryB: Sgt., I fully support what you are doing, I'm just curious how often, if at all, defense attorneys claim entrapment of the defendants as a result of the bait car?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: I have been asked that question on numerous occasions. The courts in California do not look at this as an entrapment issue. I do understand and can appreciate the question, however it has not been an issue since the inception of our program. It is the best of my knowledge that we have not been contacted by any civil liberties organizations

regarding privacy issues. And it is our stance that these vehicles are placed out there in order for thieves to steal them; however, we are not handing the keys to these vehicles to the thieves nor are we telling them to steal them. These vehicles are placed in parking lots, street corners, and anywhere else that a vehicle would normally be parked, and it is the thieves who make the conscious decision to steal that vehicle.

Court TV Host: What about the folks you pick up on your cameras from the cars and the ones the show's cameras shoot - do they have to give their permission to be on air?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: As you can see, for those of you who have watched the first four episodes, you may have noticed that some of the faces of the thieves were pixilated or altered in some fashion - that's because those individuals were juveniles, and we have to ensure their confidentiality because of their age. In regards to the adults you see on camera, there is not an expectation of privacy, nor do we need their permission to show their faces as a result of an arrest. The release of individuals' names and photographs, as a direct result of an arrest, is public record. And this is no different than watching the evening news and seeing a murder suspect, or a rapist, being placed in the back of a patrol car, following a stand-off with law enforcement.

Question from Nicole: What role do automatic and remote car starters play into this issue?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: We do not use a remote start capability - however we do use a remote kill or shutoff capability. And we use this to our advantage to ensure public safety and, as I stated previously, it's to prevent, as much as we can, the possibility of high speed pursuits and endangering or risking the lives of the public, the suspects themselves, and our personnel.

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Let me just add this on the issue of the earlier entrapment question, entrapment is a defense, however it is not a crime and by that I mean, basically inducing a person to commit a crime which was not contemplated by him or her for the purpose of prosecuting - and by that, I mean, we are not putting these vehicles out there to get the average citizen to take a vehicle. In order for a defense to utilize entrapment as a defense, the actions of myself or my fellow officers would have to be such that we conduct ourselves in a way that it would likely induce a normally law-abiding, innocent person to commit an offense. On the other hand, if I was just to provide the opportunity for the crime to be committed, by someone who was already of a mind to commit it on his or her own, then no entrapment would take place or occur. And to put it as it relates to other crimes, where law enforcement sets up, for lack of other terms, a "sting" operation, keeping those things I just said in mind, it is completely proper for us to set the stage for a vehicle theft or a mugging, or to do an undercover buy of illicit drugs. This also goes in the form of undercover female officers posing as prostitutes, trying to entice individuals to pay for services for prostitution. The bait car program is no different. And while entrapment does not apply to the things I've just talked about for a private person, if that law abiding person was acting at our behest to entice that someone to steal a vehicle, then entrapment could be a possible defense. The test for defense attorneys on trying to utilize entrapment

focuses entirely on the conduct of us as peace officers, and the issue is, bottom line, was my conduct likely to cause a normally law abiding citizen to commit the crime? And this relates from a case call Barraza in 1979 - and that's what set the precedent, among other decisions that have been handed down by courts, but particularly here in California.

Question from Cortaid: Seems to me, there wouldn't have been a crime without the bait car.

Sgt. Troy Rivers: I would ask that if that vehicle was not there, there would be another vehicle there, and that vehicle could very well have been your own, or a family member's. And had the thief not stolen that vehicle, the victim may have been yourself or a family member or a friend, instead of the state of California.

Question from fla\_L\_E\_O: Sgt, how many of these guys actually go to trial?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: In my involvement with the bait car program, and I can only speak of the roughly 200 cases that I've been associated with, that I am aware of only three cases that actually went to trial. And of those three, all were convicted. The remaining cases were all plea bargains. And we have had instances where individuals have entered the vehicle, removed the keys, and even moved the vehicle a short distance, but we take every case, every activation on a case by case basis. And depending on the circumstances, and the totality of the circumstances is what makes our determination upon whether or not an individual or individuals are in fact arrested. And there have been instances where, based upon the evidence, we deemed that this individual's intent was not to permanently or temporarily deprive the owner, in this case the state of California, of the vehicle. And that is one of the elements necessary to establish probable cause for an arrest for a charge of vehicle theft.

Question from greenacres: What's the purpose of the bait car? To catch thieves - or by its publicity - to deter?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: It's actually both. Our ultimate goal is to eliminate vehicle theft as much as possible. However, we're realists and we know that as long as there are vehicles being manufactured, or any mode of transportation, there are going to be those who wish to take them from others. By publicly showing that we have this technology, our hope is that we will deter many individuals from choosing to steal vehicles. However, the second goal of the program is for those individuals whose intent is to steal vehicles, is that they will steal ours, and not the public's. Because in California alone, vehicle theft costs the citizens of this state and the insurance industry in excess of \$1.5 billion dollars annually.

Question from grannytheftauto: Has anyone ever successfully stolen a bait car?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: No, to answer the question directly. However, due to computer malfunctions on only a couple of occasions, have the vehicles eluded us and then we fell back into good old-fashioned police work and were able to recover the vehicles in a very short period of time. But we have never lost a bait vehicle since the inception of the

program. And because we are dealing with technology, for all of you who are using your computer right now, you realize the frustration when it doesn't work properly. We have the same issues on occasion with our computers. But this is why we deploy our officers in very close proximity to the vehicles to ensure that they are in our sights at all times.

Court TV Host: Does "bait car" ever try to catch people who want to carjack cars - aren't those the people you really want to catch?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: We have not utilized our bait vehicles in that fashion, however many of the suspects that we have arrested after stealing bait cars have been found with weapons and other forms of contraband and also have prior convictions for carjacking. And this does bring up a good question - vehicle theft is a crime of opportunity - and as it relates to carjacking, those individuals that resort to carjacking do tend to prey upon those that are more vulnerable in our society. But to go back to the point I made at the beginning, car theft is a crime of opportunity, and carjackers intent is to obtain a vehicle, and by deploying a bait vehicle that would be considered easy pickings, we feel may have prevented that carjacking and thus eliminated the possibility of there being an innocent victim who is carjacked. And so our bait car program, even though it has not specifically targeted carjackers, we hope and believe prevents carjacking as a result. Because our primary concern is public safety and if we can apprehend individuals that would prey upon our citizens and prevent further victims then we feel that we have been successful. Because we are concerned about the vehicle theft issue, but our biggest concern is the safety of the public.

Question from prindewey: What is the best way for keeping your car from being stolen?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: Great question - and thanks for asking. First and foremost, don't leave your vehicle unattended with the keys in it. And particularly, don't save yourself 20 seconds by leaving your car running in the driveway or the parking lot or at the store because you're going to be gone for 20 seconds. Those are the perfect examples of the crime of opportunity that I spoke of. Specifically, aside from that, any anti-theft deterrent systems work well, because they are just that - a deterrent. Vehicle thieves will look for the easiest way to steal the car and if they are specifically looking for that 1991 Honda or that 2007 Suburban, they're going to look for the vehicle that doesn't appear to have the theft deterrent systems in place. And most importantly, be vigilant of your surroundings. When you are leaving or entering your vehicle, be aware of those around you and have your keys readily available to enter and exit your vehicle. Do not leave items of value in plain view. And again, I can't emphasize this point enough - be aware of your surroundings, be familiar with those in your neighborhood, and when you see suspicious individuals or activity, whether it's at your local shopping mall or your neighborhood, report it to law enforcement. We with the California Highway Patrol, but I feel confident of speaking of all law enforcement, we are doing everything we can to mitigate this problem. However, it is an enormous task and not only do we in law enforcement need to do everything we can to address this issue, we also need the public's support and involvement in making us aware of problems in their specific areas. And through that

collaboration of law enforcement and the public, we will be able to further make strides in making positive change in this area.

Court TV Host: Any closing thoughts?

Sgt. Troy Rivers: I'd just like to thank you all, everyone online, and those who have watched the episodes for your support. I hope that not only have you learned something from the programs but also the issues that we face in law enforcement in combating this problem. I hope these episodes of Bait Car and this online chat will stimulate discussion to not only watch future episodes but to also discuss the things the public can do to prevent this from occurring - and preventing yourselves from becoming victims. And should you ever have any questions, you can always go to [www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov). And it's not just about auto theft but about all programs that the California Highway Patrol is involved with.

Court TV Host: Thanks again, so much, for being our guest and for being so generous with your time.